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The Land Where Lost Things Go: A Play in a Prologue and Three Acts: by Doris Halman

PRIZE PLAY
DRAMA LEAGUE OF AMERICA
PATRIOTIC PLAY COMPETITION

Samuel French: Publisher
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THE LAND WHERE LOST THINGS GO

SYNOPSIS

NOTE.—* The words of this song are taken from *Sleeping*, in *A Day in a Child's Life*, published by Routledge, London. Music by Myles R. Foster. They may also be adapted to the time of Rockabye, Baby.

PROLOGUE

Alan Braith, age seventeen, is the son of a practical, pacifist father and a mother whose dread of war has been intensified by the death of her older son, Jim,—Jim, a young daredevil going straight from college to the aviation corps for the lark of it, rather than for any patriotic impulse. Therefore, in spite of Revolutionary ancestry and a grandfather who fought in the Civil War, Alan is the product of his immediate family's influence. He sees no sense in any war, much less in a war solely for the benefit of the other nations. On the evening of the prologue, he returns home after quarreling with his high-school crowd over these issues. Embittered by the squabble and by the fact that he has to write a theme on the "silly" subject of *The Land Where Lost Things Go*, he sits down to his task in a room that is cold because his father is practically if not patriotically saving coal. It is late, and he sleeps.

ACT I

(*To be set with blue-lit curtains.*)

The cold takes Alan to Valley Forge, "a far corner of the Land." There he sees an incipient mutiny against the General by freezing and ragged

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soldiers. When it is found that the government, and not the General, is responsible for the lack of supplies, the mutiny is quelled. Alan sets out for the government at Philadelphia, with the General's second appeal for aid. Incidentally, he has learned from the attitude of the very mutineers what it means to fight for one's own country.

ACT II

(To be set with green-lit curtains and a wall.)

To his grandfather's home in Philadelphia, "somewhere in the Land," comes Alan. The Civil War is to begin, and young Philip Braith is wild to go. When Alan shows him a runaway slave hiding in the garden, even the pleading of his sweetheart, Marianna, cannot hold him back. Marianna's pride is hurt, and she tells him never to come back. When he is gone, Alan, to his amazement, finds himself defending Philip, on the ground that it is right to fight for another race providing one thereby benefits one's own land. And when he has appealed to the future which he knows will reunite the lovers, Marianna softens and sends him after Philip, to tell him she will wait.

ACT III.

(To be set with rose-lit curtains, a red reflection.)

Seeking a man named Braith, Alan comes then to the Edge of the Land; and there he finds his own brother, Jim, changed from a dare-devil boy to a grave and tender man by his share in the greatest of causes. Through him, at last, Alan can understand the nobility back of the horror, and the spirit of participation.

(A brief epilogue serves to wake ALAN up, still patriotic.)

PROLOGUE

SCENE: *The living-room of the BRAITHS'. There is a fireplace at the right, with an armchair drawn close to it, and a large steel-engraving of Washington crossing the Delaware hanging above it. On the left is a writing-table, with a small chair at either side. The door is in the back wall; and prominently on this same wall hangs a much enlarged framed photograph of a smiling young man.*

When the curtain rises, MR. BRAITH is in the armchair, reading a newspaper. His gray suit has a conspicuous black band round the sleeve. MRS. BRAITH, in deep black, sits by the table, knitting a gray sweater.

After a moment of silence, she sighs and looks across at him. Her attention is caught by a photograph in the paper.

MRS. BRAITH. Young men on the front page—that always means one thing.

MR. BRAITH. Now, mother. (*But he turns the paper, and looks for himself*)

MRS. BRAITH. What—was he?

MR. BRAITH. (*Very gruff*) Oh, an aviator, mother. (*MRS. BRAITH starts; her gaze goes to her own photograph; and there is a little pause. MR. BRAITH ostentatiously turns the paper back to its former page, blowing his nose meanwhile*)

MRS. BRAITH. (*At last, softly*) I wonder—if he was a friend of Jim's? (*MR. BRAITH rattles the paper violently. She returns to her knitting. The doorbell peals about six times. MRS. BRAITH rises,*

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and her husband glances up) There's Alan. (*Exit. As soon as she is gone, MR. BRAITH begins to read about the aviator*)

A BOY'S VOICE. (*Outside*) Hello, ma, dearie! (*MRS. BRAITH re-enters, followed by a boy of seventeen, who peels off his coat as he comes in*) Hello, dad!

MR. BRAITH. Alan, you keep your mother on the jump, as usual. Where's your latch-key?

ALAN. (*Embarrassed*) Why,—in my other clothes, maybe.

MRS. BRAITH. Oh, Alan, don't you *know*?

ALAN. I—I guess I lost it, ma.

MR. BRAITH. Lost your key!

MRS. BRAITH. What won't he lose next! And now we'll have burglars!

ALAN. (*Disgusted*) Oh, say, mother!—

MR. BRAITH. All the same, young man, if you keep on losing things, we'll do something to break you of it once for all.

MRS. BRAITH. (*Because he is stern*) All boys must be alike, father. It used to be the same way, you know, with Jim. (*ALAN throws his overcoat on a chair*) Oh, Alan, your coat!—Hang it up.

ALAN. (*Making excuses*) It's cold in here. I may need it any minute.

MR. BRAITH. Son! (*ALAN takes it out*) —Has he done his lessons?

MRS. BRAITH. Probably not!

(*ALAN comes back.*)

ALAN. What makes it so cold in this house, anyway? Over to Bob's, it's warm enough. They've got heat.

MR. BRAITH. I don't care what they do, or anybody else. My government wants me to economize on coal, and we're going to do without it, just as long as we can.

ALAN. You're awfully patriotic all of a sudden.

MR. BRAITH. If all war was as sensible as this matter of home economy, I should believe in it.

ALAN. You'd like anything that saved you money.

MR. BRAITH. Well, who wouldn't?

MRS. BRAITH. (*Changing the subject*) Have you done your lessons, Alan?

ALAN. Not yet.

MR. BRAITH. And how do you expect to get through high school, if you never study?

ALAN. I meant to come home sooner, dad. But there was a bunch of fellows over to Bob's, and we got talking. (*He stops with a little scowl*)

MRS. BRAITH. Talking about what?

ALAN. Oh, war.

MR. BRAITH. I hope those boys haven't been putting romantic nonsense into your head!

ALAN. They didn't, but they tried to. We got kind of hot over it, I guess.

MRS. BRAITH. What do you mean, dear?

ALAN. They called me a—slacker—because I didn't believe in the whole business. Is it my fault that I can't see why we had to mix into somebody else's troubles? Haven't I a right to that opinion? Can't I loathe the thought of years wasted, and land destroyed, and people—getting killed? (*Moved he swings up to his brother's picture*)

MRS. BRAITH. They haven't had it brought home to them, those other boys.

MR. BRAITH. You've got more sense than any of 'em.

(ALAN, encouraged in his stand by his parents, comes back to the armchair. He talks excitedly.)

ALAN. They said I ought to be patriotic, because

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dad's father was a Civil War Veteran; and I told them he probably couldn't help himself, but got roped into *that* mess. It's easy enough to be proud about it afterwards, and tell yarns, and march all dressed up in parades.

MR. BRAITH. He was a brave man.

ALAN. Brave! What's that got to do with it? Can't you despise things you wouldn't run away from? Can't you?

MRS. BRAITH. Of course.

ALAN. Nobody ever called me a coward till to-night.

MR. BRAITH. You're not. And I know one thing about my father. He lost all his money in that war. I've had to slave hard enough to earn it back again, to know what peace is worth.

ALAN. Bill Ferris said he knew my mother was a D. A. R., because his was. He said thank God my ancestors and not me lived during the Revolution, or there wouldn't be any United States. (*He turns to his mother*) Why, dearie, he wanted to know what was the matter with you, that you didn't teach me any better!

MRS. BRAITH. Oh, yes, my ancestors. You look at their idle swords, and think you have their spirit in you. And then you learn the truth from your—descendants. I guess your friends forgot about our Jim.

ALAN. No, they didn't forget about Jim! I got plenty of Jim, I can tell you! And I—(*He stops short, looking rather abashed*)

MRS. BRAITH. You—what?

ALAN. Well, I told them the truth. I said Jim was a faddist. I told 'em he went to college because all his friends did, and that he gave it up for service abroad because the men he knew were going. He thought it was fun to be an aviator; he went to it laughing; and he didn't have the faintest idea that

he'd get—killed. You know it, mother, even you!—Jim wasn't patriotic. I told them if Jim could come back, he'd be as surprised as anybody, he'd take it as just another of life's little jokes, to find he'd died and was a hero!

MRS. BRAITH. Alan, you mustn't—even if it's true—you mustn't talk like that.

ALAN. Oh, dearie, I'm sorry. (*He bends over her, and kisses her*)

MR. BRAITH. (*Gruffly*) Now, get to work. Get to work. (*Again he blows his nose with emotion*)

ALAN. It's so late.—Maybe I could be excused.

MRS. BRAITH. But your marks aren't very good now. What have you got to do, dear?

ALAN. (*With great distaste*) A theme.

MRS. BRAITH. Oh, just that!

ALAN. Bad enough, I can tell you. If they expect fellows to write themes, why don't they give 'em a decent subject?

MRS. BRAITH. What is your subject?

ALAN. (*In utter disgust*) The Land Where Lost Things Go.

MR. BRAITH. (*Pompously*) I don't blame you. I can't imagine *myself* making up anything about that!

ALAN. Of course, it's all right for girls. They seem to like to drivel about that sort of thing. You might know my teacher was a girl *once*—she's always giving out subjects like that.

MR. BRAITH. (*With complete understanding*) Taxes your imagination, I suppose.

ALAN. What can you say about it? There isn't even any such place——

MRS. BRAITH. (*Softly*) Perhaps there is.

ALAN. (*Realizing that she, too, was a girl*) Mother!

MRS. BRAITH. Yes, perhaps. I think—Jim—would be there.

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ALAN. Oh,—don't.

MR. BRAITH. Plenty of Alan's belongings would be in that place, I guess. Come, mother. Mustn't get gloomy, dear.

MRS. BRAITH. (*Smiling at them*) I know. I know.

MR. BRAITH. Do the best you can, son. I say, the hardest job's the one to tackle. That's success!

ALAN. Oh, I suppose I'll have to.

MRS. BRAITH. Why don't you stay down here to work? It's colder upstairs. You'll have it quiet—your father and I are going to bed.

ALAN. All right. (*He goes to the table*) But I wish those fellows hadn't put all that war stuff into my head.

MR. BRAITH. (*Rising*) Nonsense! Concentrate! (*He pats him encouragingly on the back*)

MRS. BRAITH. Good-night, dear. Forget the war, and write a nice theme.

ALAN. I'll try anyhow. (*He smiles till they disappear. Then he sobers, sits down at the left of the table, takes some paper from a drawer, and tries to begin. He runs his fingers through his hair; his attention wanders; he raises his head and stares at the steel-engraving opposite. Then he rouses and shakes his fist at it. He writes a few words, then turns and speaks in a low tone to the portrait on the back wall*) I can't write if you smile at me. (*The devil-may-care young face of JIM smiles on. He throws down his pen, and, getting up, wanders restlessly toward the armchair. Picking up the paper that his father has left there, he meets the eyes of the young man on the front page. Then he flings the paper from him; and, returning to the table, changes his seat to the opposite side, slightly turned toward the audience, so as to see neither picture. He speaks again, resolutely*) Now, let's see!—The—Land—Where—Lost—Things—

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Go—(*He shivers and turns up his coat collar. Then he bends over his work*) Cold!—(*His head droops, and he lets it rest on his arms on the table. He murmurs, drowsily*) The—Land——

(*The stage goes dark.*)

The Land Where Lost Things Go

ACT I

A FAR CORNER OF THE LAND

THE CHARACTERS

THE SENTRY
THE CAPTAIN
THE TWO MUTINEERS
THE MESSENGER
THE GENERAL
ALAN

SCENE: *Long curtains of a neutral pale gray hanging straight along the back and sides of the stage from the set for this and the two following acts. They are now lighted with a steely blue glare. The ground underfoot is white and large blocks of ice are piled fantastically in the corners.*

Up and down, up and down over this frosty stage marches the SENTRY, with a sort of rhythmic hobble. He is lank and very ragged, with a wisp of a queue sticking out behind him. His legs and feet are wrapped round in varicolored cloths; his body is encased in the shreds of a Colonial uniform; and over his shoulder sags an ancient musket. But the truly amazing feature of his costume is the cerise silk knitted muffler which keeps his battered

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cocked hat safely lashed to his head. It is neither old nor worn, and its cheerful modernity almost chortles aloud.

THE SENTRY. (*Pausing to blow on his hands*) Cold!—(*He resumes his march*) Cold—cold—(*He decides to sing*) “Drink to me only with thine eyes—(*He breaks off, with a defeated grin*) Marry, it is cold! (*He listens, with head cocked on one side, to a sound from the right, which has caught his attention. Then, going to the right hand curtain, he bars the entrance, with his bayonet extended before him*) Who goes there?

(ALAN, *entering, nearly runs on the bayonet.*)

ALAN. Oh!

THE SENTRY. Not so fast, my young friend. What's the word?

ALAN. I don't know what you mean.

THE SENTRY. Then get you gone. Here's no passing.

ALAN. Well, you haven't the right to stop me! Who are you, anyway?

THE SENTRY. And who are you, which is more to the point—of my bayonet?

ALAN. I'm a citizen of the United States, and I go unmolested wherever I please.

THE SENTRY. (*Staring at him*) Merciful Gods! The lad's daft.

ALAN. Are you insulting the United States?

THE SENTRY. No, I'm not. Im a citizen of that same place, like yourself; but I haven't yet noticed the advantages you speak of. Marry, to me it means freezing and starving and bleeding, and such merri-ment. And as for going unmolested——

ALAN. How dare you!

THE SENTRY. Ah, you're thinking ahead, my

fine lad, way, way ahead. We all know there's a day coming when the country will stand for just those things, or else we wouldn't be here, the miserable pack of us. But give us time in which to make it so! And meanwhile, be off with you!

ALAN. I don't want to turn back.

THE SENTRY. No? And you don't want to go forward, mark my word for that. Here's no spot for warming babes fresh from the cradle, or any other man, save as his soul bids him come on.

ALAN. Where—is—this?

THE SENTRY. Mayhap you mistook it for the North Pole? But it's not. 'Tis only a far and freezing corner of the Land.

ALAN. What land?

THE SENTRY. Why, bless my soul, the Land Where Lost Things Go. (*He has lowered his bayonet while he stares at ALAN in amusement. ALAN comes farther in*)

ALAN. Oh! Why,—I had to write a theme about that! I thought there wasn't any such place! Do you mean to say it's a real land, like any other in the geographies, with hills and valleys—?

THE SENTRY. To be sure! And you're in a valley to start with.

ALAN. This cold place?

THE SENTRY. (*Nodding*) Valley Forge.

ALAN. (*Staring back breathlessly*) Honest?

THE SENTRY. And as I've remarked before, here's to be found no nest well feathered, nor food well cooked; and a wretch is glad enow for aught he finds that will tie his body and his soul together.

ALAN. (*Noticing the muffler*) Yes, I see.—(*He stares harder. His tone changes*) Where on earth did you find that?

THE SENTRY. Not on earth, boy; but over yonder, hanging on a bush.

ALAN. Here?

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THE SENTRY. Aye; warming the icicles. On the whole, I preferred it should warm me, color and all.

ALAN. (*Chuckling*) It's not very pretty.

THE SENTRY. 'Tis an outlandish thing. But here's no choice.

ALAN. Yes, I suppose if *I'd* been in Valley Forge, I wouldn't have tried so hard to lose it.

THE SENTRY. What! Was it yours?

ALAN. My aunt gave it to me last Christmas. I can tell you I lost it before school opened again. That made her mad; but she won't mind so much if I tell what good it did you.

THE SENTRY. You're welcome to the story.

ALAN. And you're welcome to the muffler!

(They are both laughing, when two dark forms approach them from the left. These are tall men wrapped in rags. One has no shoes, the other no hat. Both are armed.)

THE HATLESS ONE. (*To the SENTRY*) Ah, Jonas!

THE SENTRY. (*Saluting*) Captain!

THE CAPTAIN. Who passed you by to-day?

(The SENTRY hesitates.)

THE OTHER MUTINEER. There's a strange man in the camp. I saw him.

THE SENTRY. Mean you this poor crazy boy?

THE CAPTAIN. You know well enough I do not!

THE MUTINEER. The uniformed messenger, friend Jonas!

THE SENTRY. (*Pretending to remember*) Ah.

THE CAPTAIN. (*Pointing to the right*) Came he over this road?

THE SENTRY. (*Shrugging*) Aye.

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THE CAPTAIN. Good!

THE MUTINEER. (*Eager*) And whence?

THE SENTRY. From Philadelphia, he said.

THE MUTINEER. Word from the government!

(ALAN looks puzzled.)

THE CAPTAIN. Food, mayhap?

THE SENTRY. Yes, *promises* of food; and a fat feast of words withal!

THE CAPTAIN. (*Doubtfully*) If it were relief at last.—There is high time for an answer, since the general wrote.

THE MUTINEER. *Said* he wrote!

THE SENTRY. Careful, friend!

THE CAPTAIN. All the same, Jonas, we have cause to doubt. We'd not be refused help by the very government for which we struggle and die.

THE MUTINEER. *If* Congress knew our plight.

THE SENTRY. But the general sent them word.

THE MUTINEER. (*Laughing scornfully*) Are you so sure?

THE SENTRY. I saw his messenger depart this way.

THE MUTINEER. (*Sneering*) So? For Philadelphia, too.

THE SENTRY. Aye, what more do you want?

THE CAPTAIN. Remember, Jonas, the enemy is also round about Philadelphia.

THE MUTINEER. Snug and warm in the houses, curse their souls!

THE CAPTAIN. That message—might have gone to them.

THE SENTRY. (*With a start*) You fear—

THE CAPTAIN. Betrayal into their hands.

THE SENTRY. By the general—not our general—You are overzealous, friends.

THE MUTINEER. So is the winter weather, here

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in Valley Forge. When I went barefoot, that was too bad: the government must know. Now the general's shoes wear out—that is worse: the enemy must know. They will give him new shoes in exchange for the poor heap of rags that we are. He would get the better of that bargain in old clothes.

THE CAPTAIN. It is true that our condition makes us useless to him.

THE MUTINEER. Too weak to forage!

THE CAPTAIN. Too few to attack.

THE SENTRY. He does for us what he can.

THE MUTINEER. Good Jonas, what is that?

THE SENTRY. (*Obliged to stop and think*)
Marry, the huts he had us build.

THE MUTINEER. Beasts in a stable are better housed.

THE SENTRY. 'Twas only to be until the help came.

THE CAPTAIN. And now the messenger brings nothing.

THE SENTRY. He is but just arrived.

THE CAPTAIN. Then why, think you, the general keeps so silent?

THE MUTINEER. Tell us that!

THE SENTRY. Silent?

THE CAPTAIN. I have been to him with the prayers of freezing men upon my lips, begging to know what Congress will do for us. 'Tis no occasion to hold back news. The hopes of the soldiers grow as faint as their stomachs. Without reassurance, he cannot think to hold them.

THE MUTINEER. The sooner they rise, the better!

THE SENTRY. He will say naught of the message, captain?

THE CAPTAIN. No word. Only to trust in him.

THE MUTINEER. Long, sharp icicles hang on our trust, piercing his fine words through!

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THE SENTRY. (*Slowly*) Marry, it does look queer.

THE CAPTAIN. It means that we must act, Jonas.

THE MUTINEER. Aye! To get at the bottom of this general's silence.

THE SENTRY. What will you do?

THE CAPTAIN. Intercept the messenger, here, when he returns.

THE SENTRY. And if you find nothing?

THE CAPTAIN. We are only too sure of reading treason.

THE MUTINEER. If you could see how the general looks at us!

THE SENTRY. Well, what then?

THE CAPTAIN. Then we will hold him, while one of our own number sees the government at Philadelphia.

ALAN. (*Coming forward*) I beg your pardon, but you're making an awful mistake, when you keep talking about Philadelphia. Don't you mean Washington?

THE MUTINEER. (*Snarling*) Washington!

THE CAPTAIN. (*Astounded*) Washington!

THE SENTRY. (*Surprised*) Washington!

ALAN. (*Explaining*) The government.

THE MUTINEER. Ho! What fine young patriot is this, with his Washingtons! Are you made of iron that you can stand *his* government any longer?

THE CAPTAIN. (*Advancing threateningly*) Are you his partisan?

ALAN. Why, no. I meant the place. (*They look at one another, puzzled*)

THE SENTRY. What's this?

ALAN. But come to think of it, you're not very fair to him. (*The MUTINEERS close angrily about him, but he goes on bravely*) He's not to blame for war being the beastly thing it is.

THE MUTINEER. (*Snarling*) Nay!

ALAN. No, it's you. Why didn't you keep out of it in the first place? All of you. If you don't find it so pleasant now, you haven't the right to whine.

THE CAPTAIN. Who whines about the war?

ALAN. Well, aren't you planning mutiny to end it?

THE CAPTAIN. God, no! End the struggle, not having won!

ALAN. But I thought——

THE CAPTAIN. Listen, boy. There's not a man among us but would starve and freeze unto his death, gladly and smiling, for America. 'Tis that this general comes between us and our war!—

ALAN. *Your* war——

THE CAPTAIN. Aye, ours.

THE MUTINEER. And of our women, whose prayers for it daily rise to God.

THE SENTRY. And of our children, who belike shall walk free and unmolested into the paths of time.

ALAN. I thought it was always a plan of statesmen and generals, into which the people are blindly forced, unable to help themselves.

THE SENTRY. (*With pitying condescension*) How little you know, lad.

ALAN. (*Slowly*) I guess you're right.

(*Now from the left, a third man joins them, dragging with him a frightened boy in uniform.*)

THE NEWCOMER. Here's the messenger. He'll tell nothing.

THE CAPTAIN. So? Why not?

THE MESSENGER. Sir, I am ignorant of what the letters contained!——

FIRST MUTINEER. (*Sneering*) Know you whether or not you came from Congress?

THE MESSENGER. Yes, I did!

THE FIRST MUTINEER. And saw no enemy meanwhile?

THE MESSENGER. No.—(*The second mutineer shakes him*) No! Sirs, believe me—(*The man releases him, and he falls moaning*) God help me, what have I done?

THE CAPTAIN. Rise! (*The MESSENGER struggles to his feet*) You'd have us believe you a loyal fellow?

THE MESSENGER. Yes, I am——

THE CAPTAIN. Very well.—Hand me the answer.

THE MESSENGER. The what, sir?

THE CAPTAIN. *His* answer to your letter.

THE MESSENGER. But——

THE FIRST MUTINEER. Now!

THE SECOND MUTINEER. Do as you're bid!

THE MESSENGER. But I've not got it.

THE CAPTAIN. How?

THE SECOND MUTINEER. He lies, Captain.

THE MESSENGER. Nay——

THE SECOND MUTINEER. I caught him coming from the general's hut.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. Ah, the dog! (*He strikes the messenger to his knees again*)

THE CAPTAIN. (*Bending over the messenger*) Now—explain.

THE MESSENGER. 'Tis true the general sent for me.

THE CAPTAIN. What then?

THE MESSENGER. But he was not in his hut. I—I questioned his guard. They said that just before, he had walked away—reading a paper as he went—

THE FIRST MUTINEER. Truly, our general seems distraught!

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THE MESSENGER. —That doubtless I should wait for him——

THE CAPTAIN. And why did you not?

THE MESSENGER. I thought to find him in the encampment.—he had bidden me come in haste, 'twould have saved him time.—

THE FIRST MUTINEER. In haste, mark you!

THE SECOND MUTINEER. A mere word of thanks to Congress hurried so!

THE SENTRY. (*Wagging his head*) There be deeds afoot we do not understand.

THE CAPTAIN. We must get that letter. (*He turns to the mutineers*) Lift the fellow up. (*They obey*) Now, Messenger, hark to me. If I let you seek the general, there will be no hint of us in your discourse. Only that you receive his paper, and return with it to this place.

THE MESSENGER. You would take it from me then.

THE CAPTAIN. Else we rob you of your life—now. (*The messenger hesitates*) Come! It is our bargain with you.

THE MESSENGER. Nay, you can kill me! I'll not do it!

THE CAPTAIN. Consider—

THE MESSENGER. But I'll tell—(*He suddenly breaks from them and runs. When he has reached the upper left-hand corner, they catch him. Under their blows, he falls in a dark heap, and lies still*)

ALAN. (*Horried*) You killed him.

THE CAPTAIN. It was his own choice.

THE SENTRY. And not so silly, either; bringing himself snugly to the everlasting fires.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. (*Looking up from the prostrate body*) He's not dead.

THE SENTRY. Ah? Then I rejoiced for him too soon.

THE SECOND MUTINEER. Worse luck!

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CAPTAIN All the same, I wish we had been more patient with him. For now the letter may slip through our fingers.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. We'll find another way to get it.

THE SECOND MUTINEER. There is always open mutiny.

THE CAPTAIN. But the soldiers are weak. There'll be no flame without the spark to kindle it.

THE SECOND MUTINEER. (*Shaking his head*) Aye, true.

THE SENTRY. (*Listening suddenly*) Hark! Someone comes! (*He points with his bayonet toward center, back*)

THE CAPTAIN. (*To THE FIRST MUTINEER*) See who it is.

(*THE FIRST MUTINEER runs to the back, separates the curtains and peers out, then turns with a gesture of excitement.*)

THE FIRST MUTINEER. The general!

THE CAPTAIN. Himself?

THE FIRST MUTINEER. Aye, and alone. He comes from the huts.

THE SENTRY. Alone!

THE SECOND MUTINEER. Into our hands!

THE CAPTAIN. Praise the Lord!

THE FIRST MUTINEER. (*Coming down to him*) Shall we attack him?

THE CAPTAIN. Wait. First, carry that fellow off. Beyond the thicket, there to the left.—(*The two mutineers lift the messenger. The CAPTAIN comes and puts his hand on the SENTRY'S shoulder*) We can trust you, Jonas?

THE SENTRY. Oh, I'll be silent.

THE CAPTAIN. (*To ALAN*) And you?

ALAN. It's none of my business, I suppose.

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THE CAPTAIN. Good. And I'm for a look up and down the road. We've scant desire for interruptions (*He disappears through the entrance at the right*)

ALAN. (*To the SENTRY, uneasily*) Maybe, I ought to go, too.—

THE SENTRY. (*Low*) Be quiet.

(*Then in the hush that falls on the stage, the curtains at the back open slightly, and the GENERAL comes through. It is needless to describe the majesty of him, in spite of his warm clothes and the sadness of his face. Immediately the SENTRY stiffens to attention. The GENERAL comes slowly down-stage, looking from the SENTRY to ALAN. When ALAN meets the piercing gaze, he is at a loss to know what to say. On an impulse, he steps up to the GENERAL, and bows.*)

ALAN. (*Respectfully*) How do you do.—

THE GENERAL. (*Inclining his head, with the suspicion of a smile*) We have met before?

ALAN. (*Embarrassed*) Why, no, sir! (*He gathers up his courage*) But—but the last time I saw you, you were crossing the Delaware.

THE GENERAL. There was a great deal of ice in the water.

ALAN. Yes. You've had it to contend with ever since, haven't you?

(*A look of pain crosses the GENERAL's face.*)

THE GENERAL. There's no denying that. (*At this moment, the CAPTAIN returns*) Captain!

(*The CAPTAIN hesitates, and then salutes.*)

THE CAPTAIN. Sir.—

THE GENERAL. I come from inspecting the huts and the outposts of the camp.

THE CAPTAIN. They are not a pleasant sight.

THE GENERAL. Indeed, no.

THE CAPTAIN. As I told you before, sir.

THE GENERAL. (*Looking at him sharply*) True.

THE CAPTAIN. Yet you will not find us helpless, general. Our desperation gives us courage; there is still action in some of us.

THE GENERAL. I have noticed signs of that. (*The two mutineers return. They stand without saluting, silently at the left. The GENERAL looks at them, then turns tranquilly back to the CAPTAIN. Only a new edge has crept into his quiet voice*) You seem the leader of the—active party, captain. Therefore I have a task for you. Take those men whose spirits are most high on a search for forage through the countryside. Go at once—the urgency—

THE CAPTAIN. (*Losing some of his control*) You think to have us out of your way—

(*The mutineers move nearer.*)

THE GENERAL. I give you orders, sir.

THE CAPTAIN. (*Coming close to him, with fury*) No!

THE GENERAL. Stand away.

THE CAPTAIN. (*Not moving*) Would you leave? You need not hurry from us, general. There is no messenger waiting in your hut.

THE GENERAL. My messenger!—

THE CAPTAIN. Shall I tell you where he is? Convicted of treason, he lies—as it is the fate of *all* traitors to lie.

THE GENERAL. Ah. You speak as if you meant to sweep the camp. (*He folds his cloak about him*) Why trouble? Starvation does the work for you, if you wait.

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THE FIRST MUTINEER. (*Coming down to him*)
And suppose we will not wait for starvation,—sir?

(*The GENERAL turns to him, and speaks with a little sigh.*)

THE GENERAL. I fear it would not tax your patience.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. There is a shorter way.

THE GENERAL. Indeed?

THE CAPTAIN. General! Do you plan to sell us to the enemy?

(*The GENERAL, quite silent, raises his eyebrows. At last he answers.*)

THE GENERAL. No.

THE CAPTAIN. Then give us the paper that you have upon you.

THE GENERAL. Sir, it is addressed to Congress.

FIRST MUTINEER. Give us proof!

THE SECOND MUTINEER. Aye!

THE CAPTAIN. You hear them, general. They are desperate men, and this is a lonely outpost. It were well to obey.

THE GENERAL. It is not your business to know.

THE CAPTAIN. Nor yours to court mutiny.

THE MUTINEER. The paper!—The paper!

(*The GENERAL stands silent.*)

THE SENTRY. (*Coming forward, still awed*)
'Tis only fair, sir, what they ask of you. Here are no traitors, but loyal fellows—a bit sick with the cold, mayhap, but wishing the right thing done.
(*He pauses, abashed*)

THE GENERAL. (*Looking at him*) Go on.

THE SENTRY. They had your promise for relief.

You wrote—was it to Congress? In time an answer came—was it from Congress? The men have waited all day for you to speak to them—waited in the snow dreaming dreams of comfort. And you will not say one word.

THE GENERAL. I had my reason for refusal.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. (*Snarling*) Aye, we know that!

THE CAPTAIN. No more words, general.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. But the paper!

THE SECOND MUTINEER. Aye, show it to us!

THE SENTRY. For God's sake, sir, take heed of them!

ALAN. I would, if I were you!

(*The GENERAL looks round at them all. At last he speaks, in the same quiet tone.*)

THE GENERAL. If my silence would benefit you, I would still be silent. But with your confidence impaired, the paper makes no difference. (*He calmly produces the letter*) Here it is.

(*The CAPTAIN seizes it, and the others crowd round him, all but ALAN, who nevertheless is watching, very much thrilled.*)

THE CAPTAIN. Ah!

THE FIRST MUTINEER. Read it, captain.

THE SECOND MUTINEER. Tell us what it says.

THE CAPTAIN. (*Breaking the seal*) Your pardon, Congress! (*He begins to read*)

ALAN. (*Low, to the SENTRY*) I don't believe there's anything in it. Anyway, I never heard—

THE CAPTAIN. (*Suddenly*) But this is to Congress.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. What!

THE SENTRY. God be praised!

ALAN. I told you so.

THE CAPTAIN. (*Running through the pages*). And—(*Incredulous horror gives way to anger on his face*)

THE SECOND MUTINEER. What's wrong?

THE CAPTAIN. They refused us, the pigs! (*He lets the sheets drop from his hand and they scatter over the snow*)

THE GENERAL. (*Quietly*) Aye.

THE CAPTAIN. (*Stunned*) Our government refused us help.

(ALAN picks up the letter page lying nearest him, and reads it.)

THE GENERAL. Blame them not overmuch. They have not understood.

THE CAPTAIN. (*Turning on him*) So?—you side with them, general. True, they had only your description of our plight. Mayhap you were loath to trouble their minds with such poor dirt as we are!

ALAN. (*Coming forward with his page*) Look here, you people! You let me read you what your general said about you, just before you wanted to kill him. I guess you'll be ashamed.

THE SENTRY. (*Quickly*) What's that, lad?

ALAN. Listen:—(*He reads*) "I can assure those gentlemen, that it is a much easier and less distressing thing to draw remonstrances in a comfortable room by a good fireside, than to occupy a cold, bleak hill, and sleep under frost and snow, without clothes or blankets. However, although they seem to have little feeling for the naked and distressed soldiers, I feel superabundantly for them, and, from my soul, I pity those miseries, which it is neither in my power to relieve or prevent."

(*A pause.*)

THE CAPTAIN. We have been quite wrong, all through.

ALAN. Yes! Why don't you apologize?

THE CAPTAIN. (*With a wry smile*) If only we could.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. Yet who would have suspected that the government——

THE SECOND MUTINEER. When we die for them——

THE GENERAL. (*Raising his hand*) You do not die for them! They are in service, as well as you; they work, as much as you, for the selfsame end, For the United States—the safety of your soil, and the dignity of your children. And if perchance they blunder, even as now,—why, so may you, and I. And woe to him who dares confound the spirit with the fault. (*He pauses, and his voice grows more gentle*) Oh, I knew you well,—my children. You patriots with a white flame burning in your hearts. Do you wonder I was loath to blacken that, with the soot of this mistake? I want you to see your way, as clearly through to victory, as ever you did before.

THE SENTRY. Sir, we will try.

THE FIRST MUTINEER. Aye, we know what it is to be mistaken.

(*The CAPTAIN pulls his sword from his sheath, and offers it to the GENERAL.*)

THE CAPTAIN. My sword, general.

THE GENERAL. Keep it. There are villains enow to threaten with it still.

THE CAPTAIN. (*Surprised*) You—you will take no toll of us?

THE GENERAL. But I shall ask a favor of you. Tell the poor, discontented beggars yonder —(*He*

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points off toward the huts) that our relief has been delayed. From you they will believe it, however mutinous they be. And help will come this time, ere they learn the difference.

THE CAPTAIN. You think so, sir?

THE GENERAL. I am sure.

THE CAPTAIN. Then I can pacify the men. They will endure a little longer. And if I still have your permission to forage——

THE GENERAL. Collect your troop.

THE CAPTAIN. I thank you. (*He turns to the mutineers*) Come.

(*The three of them salute, and disappear at the left.*

The GENERAL walks to the corner, and takes up a posture with one foot on the ice-cakes. He is lost in meditation. Meanwhile, ALAN picks up the papers.)

ALAN. (*To the SENTRY*) Isn't it great that's over? (*But the SENTRY is stiff at attention. ALAN goes over to him, and digs him in the ribs*) Say——

THE SENTRY. (*Low*) Marry, now that I am no longer a mutineer, I must needs stand at attention.

ALAN. (*Looking at the GENERAL*) Oh,—for him?

THE SENTRY. Aye.

ALAN. (*Hero-worship beginning*) He's wonderful! (*He remembers the papers in his hands*) I must fix these—(*An idea comes to him. He goes and touches the GENERAL on the arm*)

THE GENERAL. (*Turning*) Lad?

(*They come down-stage.*)

ALAN. They've taken your messenger.

THE GENERAL. Aye, poor fellow.

ALAN. Well, of course, he's not dead; but he is out of commission.

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THE GENERAL. So it would seem.

ALAN. Wouldn't I do?

THE GENERAL. You.

ALAN. I'd like to carry that letter on to Philadelphia.

(The GENERAL looks at him for a long moment.)

THE GENERAL. But you are not of our army.

ALAN. *(Hanging his head)* No. I never wanted to be, before. I guess I—I didn't realize how much I owed to you folks for letting me call myself an American citizen, all puffed up, the way I did when I wandered in here. *(He raises his head high)* But I know now. You've got to earn the right to say that, and you've got to keep it meaning something, because the fellow you say it to isn't frightened of your voice, or of you, but of what it means. And when you do all that,—why, *that's* fighting for your country!

THE GENERAL. *(Gently)* Yes.

ALAN. Well, I never have, but I want to. *Mayn't* I take your letter?

THE GENERAL. Do you know the way?

ALAN. I'm not sure. But my father's father lived in Philadelphia. I think I could find it.

THE GENERAL. *(Extending his hand)* Then—go.

ALAN. *(Scarcely believing his ears)* To Philadelphia?

THE GENERAL. To Philadelphia.

ALAN. *(Pressing his hand)* Oh, thanks!—*(He turns and runs out past the motionless SENTRY)*

THE GENERAL. *(Thinking himself alone)* Lord, deliver us!

The curtain falls.

ACT II

SOMEWHERE IN THE LAND

THE CHARACTERS

PHILIP BRAITH
THE BLACK MAN
MARIANNA
ALAN

SCENE: *Across the curtains at the back is set a high white wall with a green gate in it. Wistaria climbs over the whiteness here and there. A white marble bench and sundial, at opposite sides of the stage, mark the place as an old garden. Over everything, the dim light throbs green, as from a full moon long since waned.*

When the curtain rises, a dark figure is crouching on the bench. There comes a knock at the gate. A silence, and then the knock is repeated. The figure on the bench moans plaintively.

THE BLACK MAN. Lawd deliber me.—Lawd deliber me.—Lawd deliber me.—

(Again the knock. The black man utters a stifled sob of terror. Then the gate is slowly pushed open, and ALAN looks in.)

ALAN. Is anyone there? *(Dead silence. He steps in a little farther)* I thought I heard a voice. *(He approaches the bench, and sees the black man)* Oh, there you are! Will you please tell me—

THE BLACK MAN. (*In a shriek*) Doan' take me back, massa! Doan' make me go!—

ALAN. Haven't you got me mixed up with somebody else? I only want to ask if this is Philadelphia.

THE BLACK MAN. Oh, dey done foun' me—dey done look——

ALAN. (*Putting his hand on him*) See here,—(*He draws back his hand*) What's the matter with your back?

THE BLACK MAN. Oh, Gawd, massa——

ALAN. I felt it under your rags. It's—rough.

THE BLACK MAN. Dis time dey kill me sah! Dey'll beat me daid!——

ALAN. (*Horried*) Beat you! Well, what sort of animals live in this house, anyway? To treat a man like that! You just let me at 'em. Tell me where they are.

THE BLACK MAN. Not here, massa!—(*Relief comes into his trembling voice*) I reckon you doan' know——

ALAN. Well, I bet you ran away.

THE BLACK MAN. Dey—didn't send you—after me?

ALAN. Of course not! I haven't any idea who "they" are. (*An awful thought comes to him*) Look here! Have you murdered anyone?

THE BLACK MAN. Oh, no, massa! No, no, no—

ALAN. What *did* you do?

THE BLACK MAN. (*Dully*) Run away.

ALAN. But what from?

THE BLACK MAN. Slavery.—(*A fresh burst of terror seizes him*) Oh, Lawd deliber me!—Lawd—

ALAN. Slavery!

THE BLACK MAN. —Lawd hab mercy!——

ALAN. Slavery! (*Suddenly he listens, looking over by the 'sundial*) A person coming! Goodness knows who.—You get behind the bench—quick.

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THE BLACK MAN. (*Rising*) Bless you, massa—
bless——

A GIRL'S CLEAR VOICE. (*From the right*)
Phil!——

(*The black man disappears.*)

ALAN. (*Whispering over the bench to him*)
Keep quiet! (*Then he gets off the bench again, and
stands trying to look as if nothing had happened.
The girl enters, and pauses by the sundial. She is
tall and dark and scornful, stately in spite of the
lavendar crinoline which billows about her*)

THE GIRL. Phil, is it you?—Oh?

ALAN. (*Embarrassed*) I've got to beg your
pardon.

THE GIRL. What did you wish, sir?

ALAN. Why,—only to ask if I'm in Philadelphia.

THE GIRL. I can give you that assurance.

(*ALAN, still bewildered, staring at her costume, be-
gins to understand.*)

ALAN. Thank you. I—I guess I *am* finding out
where I am!

THE GIRL. Can I guide you more?

ALAN. You're kind. If you'd tell me where Con-
gress meets——

THE GIRL. Sir, what did you say?

ALAN. Congress.—The government.

THE GIRL. But it's in Washington, the govern-
ment!

ALAN. Well, that's what I tried to tell them,
back at Valley Forge. Anyhow, I've got to find it.

THE GIRL. You're a strange boy.

ALAN. I guess I seem crazy. But thank you
for putting up with me. And please forgive me
for breaking into your garden.

THE GIRL. (*Putting out her hand to him*)
Certainly, sir.

ALAN. (*Shyly, taking her hand*) My name is Alan Braith.

THE GIRL. (*With a little cry of surprise*)
Braith?

ALAN. Yes, why?

THE GIRL. (*Smiling*) I took you for a man named that, when I came into the garden.

ALAN. Did you? (*His smile gives way to remembrance*) You said "Phil"—(*And the remembrance to amazement*) Why, that would make: Philip Braith!

THE GIRL. It does.

ALAN. (*Slowly*) Philip Braith—here.

THE GIRL. Perhaps you both belong to the same family.

ALAN. I—I guess we do! (*She watches him, surprised*) At any rate, that was the—name—of my—grandfather—

(*The gate is thrown open suddenly, and a boy only a few years older than ALAN comes swinging into the garden. He is very excited. His clothes are braid-bound, and he wears a black stock and longish hair.*)

THE BOY. Marianna!

ALAN. (*Turning back to her*) Oh! And you—you—! (*He breaks off. The girl, paying no more heed to him, crosses to other's waiting embrace. ALAN goes to the bench, and sits watching*)

MARIANNA. Phil!—(*She raises her face to his*) I've waited long for you to-night.

PHILIP. I know. But there is news.

MARIANNA. About the trouble?

PHILIP. It's to be war, Marianna.

MARIANNA. Oh! There has been dread in my heart—

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PHILIP. That I must hurt you!

MARIANNA. Black dread.

PHILIP. I know. It comes creeping into our plans—our little plans that were so dear.

MARIANNA. It floats between you and me like a dark fog.

PHILIP. (*Raising his head, with wonder*) And almost hides the moon.

MARIANNA. (*Shaking the fear away*) That is only if we let it, Phil!

PHILIP. What can we do? I shall have to go—

MARIANNA. Is there no way?

PHILIP. (*Hesitating*) There *has* been talk of hiring substitutes.

MARIANNA. (*Gladly*) Ah! Then we are happy again! (*He is still hesitant and unresponsive*) Why not? You an orphan, and so rich.

PHILIP. I could send a dozen in my place.

MARIANNA. Yes!

PHILIP. (*With a hint of self-scorn*) I who am young and strong.

MARIANNA. Phil! (*She turns away from him*)

PHILIP. And I've no kin to hold me back—nor even as yet a wife.

MARIANNA. Do you make so much distinction between a love in April and a wife in June?

PHILIP. Oh, no!

(*But MARIANNA walks away from him, and stands fingering the sundial.*)

MARIANNA. (*At last, low*) You want—to enter—this war.

PHILIP. (*Following her*) Oh, would you call me any less your lover, if I did? War is a man's part to do when there is need.—

MARIANNA. And what is a woman's part?

PHILIP. (*Close beside her*) Dear,—to wait.

MARIANNA. And you expect me——

PHILIP. Can we not share the war, as we have shared our love?

MARIANNA. (*Passionately*) Why should we? Is it ours to share? If you went, you would not fight for me, but for another race—unrelated. And go invading other men's homes, when no invader threatens the roof-tree of our dreams.

PHILIP. Marianna——

MARIANNA. (*Very proud*) Hark to me. If you should do this thing, battling for a cause quite alien to you, you need never return to me when it is done. I will not wait for one in whose eyes I am a toy to be laid aside.

PHILIP. (*Stern*) Hard words—from you.

MARIANNA. (*Softening to him instantly*) Our happiness means more to me than a hundred wars.

PHILIP. Your words are childish, too.

MARIANNA. No child can love like this!

PHILIP. (*Shaken*) But—my country claims me.

MARIANNA. You forget. She will accept another in your place. Not I—so readily.

PHILIP. (*With a trace of bitterness*) You, who say you will not wait.

MARIANNA. (*Turning a little from him*) Oh! You didn't use to care so little. (*Getting no response, she says, looking about her*) It was hard to win me—in the old days. Many came through the green gate when the moon was high, and sat beside me there, or stood to read the dial's wise old words. You were one of them—one! (*She laughs uncertainly*) Then the garden heard a different story from to-night.

PHILIP. (*Sharply, as if hurt*) Marianna!

MARIANNA. Ah, you remember!

PHILIP. I remember.

MARIANNA. I was treasured of you then.

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PHILIP. (*Responding, half against his will*)
You are so dear now——

MARIANNA. (*Coming close to him suddenly*)
Can you still see the moon? .

PHILIP. (*Wondering*) Yes. It shines through
the dread of war.

MARIANNA. Oh, look at it! It paints sweet
shadows in the curves of my lips, and turns to jet
the little locks of my hair. Did you know it was
doing it all for you? And it dances in silver rays
of the words that pass between us—all for you——

PHILIP. (*Coming nearer*) Your voice is soft
and low——

MARIANNA. You are ungrateful to the moon.

PHILIP. (*Gathering her into his arms*) No,
sweet!

MARIANNA. (*Low*) You will not leave me,
Phil?

PHILIP. (*Laughing*) The substitute can go.

MARIANNA. Promise——

PHILIP. I promise—by the moon! (*Laughing
happily, they cross the stage together*)

MARIANNA. (*Meanwhile*) Then come!—for we
can dream again. (*As they draw near to the bench,
ALAN rises to meet them*)

ALAN. Excuse me, but this war—it's going to
free the slaves, isn't it?

PHILIP. Yes.

ALAN. Well, do you mind if I tell? There's
someone here that will be glad enough to know.
(*He climbs on the bench again, and calls over the
back*) Hey!—come on out.

(*The black man shuffles out from his hiding. When
he sees PHILIP and MARIANNA, he shrinks back
against ALAN.*)

MARIANNA. (*A little frightened*) Who is that?

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ALAN. A slave. I found him hiding in your garden.

(*PHILIP has drawn away from MARIANNA, and approaches the black man, as if fascinated by the sight of him.*)

PHILIP. A slave?

THE BLACK MAN. (*As he comes nearer*) Lawd, Lawd hab mercy——

ALAN. Don't be afraid. (*The black man ceases to moan*) Didn't you hear what my—what this man said just now? All the people are going to be made free.

THE BLACK MAN. (*Scarcely able to comprehend*) Free? Oh, massa, massa——

ALAN. Well, first it will take a lot of fighting.

THE BLACK MAN. Who gwine fight—for us?

ALAN. Oh, everybody.

(*The black man falls sobbing to his knees.*)

THE BLACK MAN. Free—free—free——

ALAN. (*Over his head, to PHILIP*) No wonder he's glad. Look what they did to him.

PHILIP. (*Staring down*) Yes. I see.

ALAN. He ran away. Can they come and get him?

PHILIP. They shall not get him.

ALAN. No. Wouldn't it be awful?

(*The black man looks up at PHILIP.*)

THE BLACK MAN. Strong young massa, you gwine sabe me. You gwine fight!—

PHILIP. (*Slowly*) Not I.

THE BLACK MAN. But he say——

PHILIP. Other people will.

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THE BLACK MAN. (*Despair returning*) I reckon nobody wants to—jes' like you.

PHILIP. But I—(*He catches himself*)

THE BLACK MAN. It ain't to be. It ain't to be! (*Suddenly he clings to PHILIP'S knees*) Why doan' you help de sufferin', massa? *Why?*

(*PHILIP puts one hand on the black man's shoulder, and stretches the other out toward MARIANNA.*)

PHILIP. (*After a little pause*) Marianna!

MARIANNA. (*Who has stood aside*) Yes?

PHILIP. Why do you come no nearer?

MARIANNA. Because the man is wretched.

PHILIP. True enough. The marks of his master's lash are on him still, and the fear in his heart is greater than your fear.

MARIANNA. And what is that to me?

PHILIP. Did you hear what he said?

MARIANNA. I heard.

PHILIP. And it is nothing to you?

MARIANNA. Nothing.

PHILIP. Can't you be sorry for him—so sorry that your throat tightens, and your fists clench—until you understand?

MARIANNA. I am sorry for him, but I do not understand.

PHILIP. See. The welts on his back are curved more than your lips, and his rags hang down like the little locks of your hair. The agony of his cry rings clearer to me than the soft notes in your voice. He needs me more than you.

MARIANNA. (*Quick and low*) You promised me—you would not go to war.

PHILIP. My duty to him is greater than my duty to you, Marianna.

MARIANNA. Your substitute goes forth to fight for him. What do you owe him more?

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PHILIP. There would be a place for me by the side of my substitute. We could do more work together!

MARIANNA. You promised me.—

PHILIP. Half doubting, while I did.

MARIANNA. A promise is a promise.

PHILIP. For the sake of hundreds like this man, let me take it back.

MARIANNA. Do you care so little?

PHILIP. Care for you? So much that I want to be worthy of you, Marianna.

MARIANNA. I am satisfied, as you are.

PHILIP. But—

MARIANNA. And I want you!

THE BLACK MAN. Lawd, Lawd, deliber me.—
Lawd—

PHILIP. Listen.

MARIANNA. He is not calling on you.

PHILIP. No. This time, I am the substitute.

MARIANNA. What do you mean?

PHILIP. That I must go, Marianna. It isn't possible for me to sit still in a country torn asunder. All the substitutes my wealth could send would only make so many more men braver than I, to sneer at me. And from my marriage with you would come a race of cowards. (MARIANNA *turns away, hiding her face in her hands*. PHILIP *waits, made hopeful by her emotion*. ALAN, *stung by his words, takes a step forward*)

ALAN. Oh, I'm not a coward, I didn't realize—

(*But PHILIP doesn't heed him, because MARIANNA has touched him on the arm.*)

MARIANNA. (*Softly*) Can you no longer see the moon?

PHILIP. I see a great light, streaming from ahead. But I think it is not the moon.

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MARIANNA. Does it shine on me?

PHILIP. If you stand by my side, it will shine on you.

MARIANNA. (*Gently*) The moon is here.

PHILIP. This seems to come from a torch.

ALAN. (*Enlightened*) Oh! You mean Liberty, don't you?

PHILIP. (*Exalted*) That's it!

MARIANNA. Think of the dear past.

PHILIP. I can't. It blinds me.—

MARIANNA. (*With a little despairing cry*) Oh!

PHILIP. But I can see the future—wonderful—

MARIANNA. (*Clinging to him*) Phil! Phil! Listen to me——

PHILIP. (*Gently*) Afterwards.

(*Beaten, MARIANNA turns away again.*)

ALAN. And I thought you couldn't help yourself!

(*MARIANNA, mistress of her emotion, comes and faces PHILIP.*)

MARIANNA. If you take back your word, I will not take back mine.

PHILIP. (*Waking from the vision*) Marianna!

MARIANNA. Choose.

PHILIP. You see no reason in my going to war?

MARIANNA. No.

PHILIP. You will not wait for me?

MARIANNA. No.

PHILIP. When I am gone, you will not think of me?

MARIANNA. No.

PHILIP. Not even—kindly, as of a friend that is dead?

MARIANNA. *If*—you have made your choice.

PHILIP. Then God help me, Marianna. For I shall go lonely into battle, and hope at the end for death.

MARIANNA. Death may be sweet to one who esteems not riches and love. I cannot say.

PHILIP. Love? Do you think—(*He breaks off hopelessly*) Well, we'll not talk of that.

MARIANNA. Lest it be desecrated by blood-thirsty lips!

PHILIP. (*Bowing his head*) As you will. (*A pause. Then he speaks, quietly and sadly*) The future I saw ahead isn't for me. (*He stoops and touches the black man on the shoulder*) But you, my friend! It's your turn, and I hope you enjoy it.

THE BLACK MAN. Bless you, sah!

PHILIP. Marianna! Now that you are lost to me, there is no one to live upon my lands. When I am gone, will you see that they are turned over to the government for its need? Will you do me this last favor?

MARIANNA. You will have nothing, if you should come back.

PHILIP. I shall try not to come back—very hard.

MARIANNA. Oh.

PHILIP. Marianna, I am going now. God bless you, oh, my dearest,—(*He starts to take her hand, but she moves away*) Not even—for farewell?

MARIANNA. Choose. (*PHILIP stares at her a moment. Then, head high, he turns and walks out of the garden. The green gate closes behind him. MARIANNA draws one long breath that holds a stifled sob*)

ALAN. (*Coming forward*) Oh, look here! You aren't going to let him go like that!

MARIANNA. And why not?

ALAN. Well, it's awfully mean. Even if you weren't just putting it on, it would be bad enough. Why, I'm ashamed of you grandmo—Marianna!

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MARIANNA. How dare you say that I pretend?

ALAN. Because you feel so badly. (*She makes a gesture of denial*) Oh, yes, you do! Why didn't you let him say good-bye? Were you afraid you'd jump into his arms and cry there?

MARIANNA. No! No.

ALAN. Why won't you call him back?

MARIANNA. (*Haughtily*) Because I—won't.

ALAN. Isn't that like a girl!

MARIANNA. (*Facing him scornfully*) What do you know about girls?

ALAN. Plenty, I can tell you! (*She laughs. Whereupon he grows more excited, and begins to pace the garden during his confession*) You needn't laugh. Girls don't know their own minds half the time, and they quarrel for nothing. Why, I took a girl to a dance once, and she gave me the bow off her slipper for a keepsake——

MARIANNA. Did she?

ALAN. (*Not to be stopped*) Yes! And I lost it the first thing. I said I never would, but I did. And she wouldn't speak to me again. That's what I know—(*He stops short in his pacing, to pick up an object he has almost stepped on. Amazed, he holds out to MARIANNA'S gaze the white rosette of a slipper. Then, suddenly chuckling, he puts it away in his pocket*) Just you wait till I get home!—

MARIANNA. Oh! You will mend your quarrel.

ALAN. Yes, and you must mend yours.

MARIANNA. It was not of my making. He broke his word to me.

ALAN. (*Hardly realizing what he says*) But don't you see that he was *right*?

MARIANNA. You say that?

ALAN. Yes.—Why,—why, I—(*It dawns on him that he has changed his views. But that does not alter his decision*) Yes, I do!

MARIANNA. You—hesitate.

ALAN. Well, I'll tell you. I always thought it was foolish to mix into another person's fight. Oppression's too bad, but—if you stamp it out in one form, it comes back in another. But don't you see,—when you've got it right in your own country, and you can't legislate it out,—why, then, you've just got to pitch in and kill it. It isn't a question of the other person any more, Marianna, it's the safety of your own country; and I found out back in Valley Forge what that can mean to anyone!

MARIANNA. Valley Forge was long ago.

ALAN. Why,—it doesn't seem so. I guess war's all terrible. I guess it's all pretty much alike. Only, back there, the men said it was the prayers of their womenfolk that kept them from dying of misery. And you've let your man go heartbroken; and if you pray for him, he'll never know it.

MARIANNA. I will not pray for him.

ALAN. You know better,—Marianna!

MARIANNA. (*Turning away*) Oh.

ALAN. Every day you'll get sorrier and sorrier, thinking of him.

MARIANNA. (*Low*) Be still.

ALAN. And you'll never go to sleep without meeting him in all your dreams.

MARIANNA. Go away.

ALAN. Maybe you won't sleep at all.

THE BLACK MAN. Lawd deliber me.—Lawd deliver—

ALAN. (*Approaching MARIANNA*) You had better ask to be delivered, too, out of your cruelty.

MARIANNA. (*Turning on him*) Oh, will you let me be?

ALAN. Not till you call back Philip Braith, and tell him that you love him.

MARIANNA. I will not call him back.

ALAN. It may be too late. Won't you let me go and see?

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MARIANNA. No.

ALAN. (*Desperately*) But—you've got to in the end.

MARIANNA. Why?

ALAN. Because, sooner or later, he'll find you out.

MARIANNA. If you told him, he would not believe you.

ALAN. And what about the time when he comes home?

MARIANNA. He—may—not——

ALAN. (*Laughing suddenly*) But he will! And then what are you going to do?

MARIANNA. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

ALAN. (*Reproachfully*) Oh, grandmo—Marianna! Don't try to be so heartless. If you've got to marry him some day, why not spare him all the pain he's suffering now?

MARIANNA. Marry him—now?

ALAN. Even yet. You wait.

MARIANNA. (*Scornful*) So you can read the future.

ALAN. (*Nodding at her*) You see, I come from there.

MARIANNA. And it holds that Philip and I—that we——

ALAN. Oh, yes!

MARIANNA. (*Still scornful*) Next you'll be telling me that old age will make me beautiful.

ALAN. My father says it did.

(MARIANNA stares at him in silence. When she speaks, her tone has softened strangely.)

MARIANNA. Did your father—know me?

ALAN. Yes, g—Marianna.

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MARIANNA. (*Slowly*) I think I must have liked your father.

ALAN. (*Smiling at her rather shyly*) Yes, you did.

MARIANNA. What—is his name?

ALAN. (*Hesitating*) Reginald—Philip——

MARIANNA. (*Starting*) But that's what Phil and I—that's what we would have called——

ALAN. Yes, I know. Father always wondered why.

MARIANNA. (*Seeing visions*) He thought of Reginald, and I wanted the Philip.—

ALAN. It's fun to plan those things.

MARIANNA. Oh, you can't imagine——

ALAN. You've taken the right away from yourself.

MARIANNA. But I can't stop.

ALAN. Perhaps he can't either. It would have taken his mind off the horrible war sometimes, to make up children's names. But you've taken away the right from him, too.

MARIANNA. I thought he deserved it.

ALAN. Because he wanted to make a happy country for the children he had named. Because——

MARIANNA. (*With sudden passion*) Oh, go! Run after him!

ALAN. (*Starting for the gate*) What shall I tell him?

MARIANNA. Say to him that I wait!

(*Joyfully ALAN runs out. We hear his happy voice calling down the Land.*)

ALAN. Philip Braith—Philip Braith——

(*MARIANNA stands very tall and straight by the bench, her white face uplifted, fighting the tears*)

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that run down her cheeks in spite of everything.)

THE BLACK MAN. (*Moaning piteously*) Lawd
deliber me.—Lawd deliber me.—Lawd deliber me.—

MARIANNA. (*Gently, still fighting the tears*) If
He will only spare—all his children.

And the curtain falls.

ACT III

THE EDGE OF THE LAND

THE CHARACTERS

JIM

THE BELGIAN CHILD

THE ENGLISH CHILD

THE BABY FROM PARIS

THE POLISH CHILD

OTHER CHILDREN

THE YOUNG MAN OF THE FRONT PAGE

ALAN

SCENE: *The curtains are now colored with a pale rose and violet glow, as if from the reflection of a crimson flare a long way off. Diagonally across the stage from right to left lies a fallen tree; but its stump is not there.*

On the trunk of this tree, well front, sits a young man in a worn aviator's uniform. He holds a child in his arms—a little girl—and is looking down at her. His young face is rather full, the chin set square, the look in his eyes straight and beautiful. Were it not for these things, he would resemble more the photograph in the prologue.

He sits there watching the child; with a hand on one of her wrists, he holds her little arm extended.

THE YOUNG MAN. (*As if in reverie*) If they only spared the children—(*She stirs, and he lets her arm rest on his knee. She opens her eyes and*

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sits up. Then he smiles down at her, a slow, tender, radiant smile. THE YOUNG MAN *very gently*) Hello. (*She looks at him with great, wondering eyes*) Feels better to be a whole little girl again, doesn't it?

THE CHILD. Yes. You don't know how to act when you're all in pieces. Did you put me together?

THE YOUNG MAN. Yes.

THE CHILD. (*Politely*) I hope I didn't make you too much trouble.

THE YOUNG MAN. Of course not.

THE CHILD. I'm glad some of me didn't get lost in coming. It must be a long way—from Belgium.

THE YOUNG MAN. Yet we wouldn't have Belgium any nearer to this place, would we?

THE BELGIAN CHILD. Did you come from there, too?

THE YOUNG MAN. I flew here out of the air.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. High up?

THE YOUNG MAN. No, it was down. Down, and down—and down. Very quickly. Rolled in a ball of blue sky and red flame mixed together, swirling.—

THE BELGIAN CHILD. (*With a long breath of admiration*) Oh!

THE YOUNG MAN. You might run about a little, if you liked.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. I don't want to leave you.

THE YOUNG MAN. You're all right now.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. Yes. You were good to me.—What do you call yourself?

THE YOUNG MAN. Jim.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. Jim. I don't want to leave you any more.

JIM. Then you needn't. I'll adopt you—how will that be?

THE BELGIAN CHILD. Oh! For your sister?

JIM. My kid sister.

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(She sighs with delight and slips to the ground. Then, laying one little hand on his knee, she asks:)

THE BELGIAN CHILD. Have you any other sisters?

JIM. No. *(The beautiful smiles curves his lips again)* But once I had a—kid brother.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. A baby?

(He shakes his head and starts to reply, when out of the space behind them, a little girl's voice comes softly singing.)

THE LITTLE VOICE.

*“Lullaby, lullaby, baby dear,
Take thy rest without a fear”;—

(And there enters, not noticing them for her charge, a fair-haired girl of about twelve, holding in her arms an infant. They are hardly related. for the baby's long, rich coat falls softly over a ragged pinafore and torn stockings. The little girl walks carefully across the back of the stage, crooning the while.)

“Quiet sleep, for mother is here,
Ever wakeful, ever near.”—

(Turning down-stage, past the foliage of the tree, she becomes aware of the watchers. To them she says, hastily) Sh! 'E's asleep, 'e is.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. Oh, you have one, also!

JIM. *(To the child, explaining)* She means your little brother.

THE LITTLE GIRL. 'E ain't mine. I'm English.

JIM. Isn't he?

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THE ENGLISH CHILD. No, 'e's a baby from Paris that I just found. 'E's so little 'e can't even talk French yet.

JIM. How do you know he's from Paris?

THE ENGLISH CHILD. Lookit 'is style!

THE BELGIAN CHILD. May I play with him?

THE ENGLISH CHILD. Some other time. I'd mind it if 'e waked. 'Is mother 'asn't come with 'im, and I'm afraid 'e'd miss 'er, if 'e knew.

JIM. Is that why you sing to him?

THE ENGLISH CHILD. It's fibbin'. But it keeps 'im 'appy like. *(She sits down in the shade of the branches and begins to croon again)* —“Mother is here——

THE BELGIAN CHILD. We keep coming, every

(Now only at intervals, the crooning rises into intelligible words. As she completes this couplet, already given, two other tots wander through the scene, smiling, hand in hand.)

JIM. *(Watching them)* What a lot of you there are in this place—you little children. day.

JIM. Yes. So many that there ought to be a school for you. *(He smiles again)* My kid brother goes to school.

THE ENGLISH CHILD. *(Looking up)* I was in a school when I started 'ere.

JIM. Do you remember that?

THE ENGLISH CHILD. The teacher cried. And then there was a bang. And the wind blew all the way.

(A little dark-eyed boy, very ragged, rushes in. He has something clutched in his hand. Behind him come two or three others, all peasants, trying to see; and the two little tots who passed

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return. The boy himself is thin, and his eyes look out from a dead-white face.)

JIM. Oh, I remember you. We met the day you came. You were looking for food—you couldn't forget you didn't have to.

THE LITTLE BOY. It's hard to forget some things.

JIM. Well, you must have, by now!

THE LITTLE BOY. But I looked again to-day.

JIM. Why, little chap——

THE LITTLE BOY. I like it so much to realize all of a sudden, that it won't hurt me, not to find any.

JIM. Did you find something else?

THE LITTLE BOY. Yes. A hard thing. We don't have them in our village. Maybe not in all Poland! What is it?

JIM. (*Taking the thing*) Why, I know! (*He gets up, and stands with all the children looking at him. He begins to smile at the object in his hand*) It's a latch-key!

THE POLISH BOY. What's a latch-key?

(JIM, still smiling ahead of him, tells the boy. *There is an odd little throb of growing pleasure in his voice, not at some half-homesick remembrance, but as if he recalled a fleeting dream, than had once been very pleasant indeed.*)

JIM. You fasten your door with it when you leave your house, so that no one can break in and steal all your money, and your family silver——

THE BELGIAN CHILD. A German could get in.

JIM. Why, yes. I guess he could.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. (*Wisely*) It's no use at all. You might just as well throw it away.

THE ENGLISH CHILD. (*Suddenly raising her song*) "Lullaby, lullaby, gone is the light——"

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JIM. (*Putting the key in his pocket*) Someone will have to see to that.

THE ENGLISH CHILD. (*Continuing more softly*)
"You let not darkness my baby fright——"

(*While she sings, a young aviator has entered from the right. He walks slowly, almost gropingly, looking about him with curiosity. When he turns his head and sees the back of JIM's familiar uniform, the puzzled look in his eyes fades a little. He steps over the tree-trunk, which brings him face to face with JIM.*)

THE YOUNG MAN. Well, Braith!

JIM. (*Looking up*) Hello! It's good to see you again! (*They shake hands*) Didn't know you were here.

THE YOUNG MAN. Oh, I've just come. Seemed pretty strange till I saw a good familiar uniform. (*He laughs*) Guess this means my picture on the front page, back home! I never thought I'd be famous enough for that!

JIM. Your folks will cherish it.

THE YOUNG MAN. No. My folks aren't there, Braith. Haven't been for years. They won't know—(*Great joy flashes suddenly over his face*) Say! Do you think I can find them? Do you suppose I could?

JIM. Why not?

THE YOUNG MAN. But where? Where?

JIM. Farther along the Land. (*He points off to the left*)

THE YOUNG MAN. I'm going to try!

JIM. Good luck!

(*Again they clasp hands; and then the young man of the front page hurries away. But at the opening of the curtains on the left, he is met*

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by ALAN, who is rushing along in exactly the same manner. The young man catches ALAN by the shoulders, to prevent a collision. Meanwhile, the children have closed about JIM, who has seated himself on the tree again.)

THE YOUNG MAN. I beg your pardon!

ALAN. (*Out of breath*) And—I—yours!—

(They straighten themselves out.)

THE BELGIAN CHILD. (*To JIM*) Show us your bright ribbons.—

(The children cluster about his medals.)

THE YOUNG MAN. I was so anxious to find my folks.

ALAN. Me, too!

THE YOUNG MAN. Really? (*His face grows pitying, as he glances over his shoulder in the direction from which he has come*) But I'm afraid it's no use for you, if you've reached this far.

ALAN. Why?

THE YOUNG MAN. You've come to the Edge of the Land.

ALAN. (*Very disappointed*) Oh! (*He adds gloomily*) That means I missed him. It's the Land Where Lost Things Go, I s'pose I've lost my way.

THE YOUNG MAN. Too bad.

ALAN. (*On a sudden hope*) You haven't seen him here, have you? Man named Braith—?

THE YOUNG MAN. (*Genially*) Braith? What luck! Why, Braith's over there! (*He designates the group about the tree*)

ALAN. (*Pleased*) Is he? Thanks a lot.

THE YOUNG MAN. Glad to have helped. (*He goes on his way*)

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(ALAN comes toward the group of children, trying to see over their heads. But the children are absorbed in examining the medals which JIM is holding out for their inspection.)

ALAN. (*Very superior and impatient, to the outermost child*) I'd like to get by.

(*At his words, the group slowly divides, all the children looking at him and backing away, till at last a path is left clear between him and JIM.*)

THE ENGLISH CHILD. (*Singing out of the hush*)
"And give thee, smiling, to day and to me——"

(JIM rises and comes forward a few steps, looking at ALAN intently. ALAN, also advancing, starts and stops dead. Then, slowly, JIM begins to smile. ALAN cries out, with the voice of one seeing a miracle.)

ALAN. Jim!

JIM. Hello, kid.

(ALAN flings himself sobbing into his brother's arms.)

ALAN. Jim! Jim! (*He lifts his head and looks at him*) It's you.

JIM. It surely is!

ALAN. And I thought I'd never see you again.—

JIM. Are you glad to?

ALAN. Oh, Jim!

JIM. Why, so am I!

ALAN. To see me?

JIM. You bet.

ALAN. It's wonderful. I was looking for another Braith, and I found you, instead.

JIM. You never expected me to turn up, like a bad penny, here at the Edge of the Land!

ALAN. The Edge—Then that's what the red light means. (*His eyes are fixed on the glow which seems to come from the right*)

JIM. Red light? (*He looks over his shoulder*) Oh, back there. (*He turns, and the two stare at it together*) Isn't it a glory?

ALAN. (*Putting a hand to his eyes*) Not—when you face it.

JIM. It is, when you look back.

ALAN. (*In a peculiar tone*) Is it?

(JIM turns and meets his puzzled gaze.)

JIM. Sonny.—

ALAN. What?

JIM. What are you doing here?

ALAN. Passing through.

JIM. But how did you come?

ALAN. (*Pointing to the left*) Oh,—far corners—the cold, and Philadelphia.—

JIM. And what was going on, to bring you in those places?

ALAN. Well, first I was in Valley Forge. They were fighting the Revolution there. Then I came to Philadelphia, and found the Civil War had just begun.

JIM. What wars were those?

ALAN. (*Amazed*) Huh?

JIM. What wars?

ALAN. (*Very distinctly*) I said the Revolution and the Civil War.

JIM. I don't remember hearing of them.

ALAN. Why, Jim Braith!

JIM. But I don't. Not at all.

ALAN. We were both of us pretty bad at history, but, my goodness, everybody's heard those names.—

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JIM. Perhaps I did, too. Why have I forgotten?

ALAN. Think.

JIM. My comrades and I never thought of that!

ALAN. Well, I know, because I came right through them.

JIM. (*Pointing to the right*) Not the other way.

ALAN. (*Vehemently*) I should say not!

(*The children shrink a little away. JIM's straight gaze becomes strangely piercing. ALAN finds himself in a second hush, out of which the English child is singing.*)

THE ENGLISH CHILD. "May thy small dreams
no ill things see,"—

ALAN. (*Turning, suspicious*) What does she mean?

JIM. Her song?

ALAN. About "small" dreams,—and seeing no ill things.—

JIM. She's protecting the baby.

ALAN. Oh. I thought she was making fun of me. (*He eyes the group*) Awful lot of children.

JIM. Yes, sonny.

ALAN. My, they must bore you to death!

JIM. No.

ALAN. *What? You?*

JIM. (*Laughing*) Even me. I've been working for them so hard, I've rather got to like them.

ALAN. (*Reproachful*) Jim!

JIM. And, what's more, I've adopted a sister. You'll have to be introduced.

ALAN. (*Reluctant*) All right, if you want me to. (*He takes a few steps toward the children, saying as he goes:*) Which one is it? (*The children shrink farther away*) What's the matter with them?

JIM. They don't know you.

ALAN. Well, how should they?

JIM. They're afraid you are not their friend.

ALAN. The idea! As if I'd hurt them!—

JIM. Where they come from, there's a new notion of friendship. When the world's all made up of being hurt or being saved, and nothing passive about it, you can't win trust by just keeping your hands off. Other hands will get there, unless you strike them away. That's the trouble.

ALAN. Oh.

(JIM puts out his hand to the Belgian child.)

JIM. Little sister from Belgium! (*She comes to his side timidly, and takes his hand, her big eyes wondering*) Do you remember the kid brother I told you about? This is he.

(*The child curtsies to ALAN.*)

ALAN. (*Rather embarrassed*) How do you do, —sister.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. (*Always polite*) I hope you don't mind sharing.

ALAN. Sharing Jim?

THE BELGIAN CHILD. Yes. You see, we didn't expect you to come. And I was all alone, too.

ALAN. Haven't you any folks?

THE BELGIAN CHILD. (*Recalling the dream of her past*) My daddy is marching on a long march—all day—all night.—

ALAN. And your mother—

THE BELGIAN CHILD. (*Softly*) I think—I think my mother went to their country. (*She turns to JIM in her half-puzzled way*) It was the key—being no good.—

JIM. (*Gently, but with a stern voice*) I know.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. (*Suddenly laughing*)

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She'll be here, by and by. We'll all have a great deal of fun.

(ALAN looks at JIM. But the Polish child has reached him and pulls him by the sleeve.)

THE POLISH CHILD. (To ALAN) You're older than I am.

ALAN. I should say so!

THE POLISH CHILD. And you must have enough to eat—you're so tall.

(The English child has risen, still with the baby in her arms. She joins the little group about ALAN.)

THE ENGLISH CHILD. He says you go to school.

ALAN. I do.

THE BELGIAN CHILD. Do you wear a mask?

ALAN. Of course not.

THE ENGLISH CHILD. Do you like school?

ALAN. I'd be glad enough if it blew up some day.

THE ENGLISH CHILD. Mine did.

(ALAN stares at her, and then suddenly puts his fingers in his ears.)

ALAN. Oh, don't! (He comes back to JIM) Do they keep talking and talking about those things?

JIM. Why not?

ALAN. And you have to listen to them, day in and day out—(He pauses, looking round him, with a new idea) Say, Jim! What do you do here, anyhow? All the time?

(JIM grows very stern.)

JIM. We're—waiting.

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THE CHILDREN. (*Taking up his words*) Yes, waiting.—Waiting.—Waiting.

ALAN. What for?

JIM. For the last of the Cæsars.

ALAN. To—come—here?

JIM. Yes!

ALAN. But—won't that be rather unpleasant for you people?

(*JIM smiles and shakes his head.*)

JIM. When he comes, he will be only a tired, stooped old man walking among the shadows. He'll go seeking through the dim Land for rest, but the patter of the children's feet, who pass him by, will keep him always awake. You see, there are so many of them! It will be long that they drive him wakeful and apart in dark places.

ALAN. That wouldn't be so bad.

JIM. No. But therein lies hope for us and for you; and it will happen soon, please God.

(*On his last words, a great peal of beautiful hushed chimes rings faintly out of the air.*)

THE CHILDREN. (*Looking toward the left*) The cathedrals!—The cathedrals!—

THE BELGIAN CHILD. (*To JIM*) They want to go. I can take them there.

JIM. Go ahead; and ask, all at once, for that.

(*The children form an odd little procession, two by two. As the chimes continue to ring, they file off to the left. The English child still carries the baby from Paris. The Belgian child, at the head of the line, turns and waves one little hand to JIM. He gives her a gay salute. The children disappear, and the chimes die slowly away.*)

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ALAN. (*Half shy and half in scorn*) Your new sister's awfully religious, Jim.

JIM. She's proud of the beauties in her old cathedrals.

ALAN. Oh, I see.

JIM. (*Smiling at him kindly*) Yes, that's it.

(ALAN sits down on the tree-trunk.)

ALAN. Now I've got you all to myself, anyway.

JIM. So you like this better!

ALAN. I can tell you I do! (*Then he adds, trying to please JIM*) Of course, they're mighty nice children, but don't you *ever* wish there weren't quite so many about?

JIM. I wish there were none at all.

ALAN. (*Ashamed*) I—forgot.

JIM. Forgot?

ALAN. Where I am. Having you, it's just like being home again—in the old days. (*He stares up at his brother again*) Only, it—*isn't*,—Jim.

JIM. What do you see?

ALAN. Something's different. Something in you. Why, just now, I—I didn't know you, at first.—(*He realizes*) You're not like the picture!

JIM. (*Smiling quizzically*) Ah, the picture!

ALAN. Do you remember the one? Big thing, with you grinning at the whole world.

JIM. Taken while I was in college.

ALAN. Yes!

JIM. When all red light was fireworks.

ALAN. And all life was a joke.

JIM. And death, too, I guess.

ALAN. Jim,—was it coming here that changed you?

JIM. No, indeed. Lord, one doesn't have time to change anything, coming here. Just as you are, you arrive—and nobody minds a bit.

ALAN. Well, it's queer. You're not two years

older than you were at home, but you act ages more than that. And your face used to be thin and twinkly with fun, and now it's a regular man's face. I haven't grown up like that, and they say I'm at the growing age.

JIM. No. You look just about the same, sonny. (*He sits down beside him*) Tell me what you've been doing.

ALAN. Nothing. I go to the old school, and chum with the old crowd.

JIM. Bob and the others.

ALAN. Yes. And I'm always losing things, just the same as ever!

JIM. (*Laughing*) Family trait.

ALAN. Uh-huh. Even to-night, I lost my latch-key.

JIM. Oh. (*He takes the key from his pocket*) Is this it?

ALAN. Yes! Give me—(*JIM shakes his head and returns the key to his pocket*) Oh, please, Jim.—

JIM. What for?

ALAN. Why, so I can take it home with me. (*He waits; and, getting no response, gives a new reason*) I know I deserve not to get it back, and all that,—but there's mother, you know. She's mighty scared of burglars. Think how much safer she'll feel when she finds it. (*He looks at JIM, whose stern expression hasn't changed, and chuckles*) I've got you there, Jim! You'll have to give it, for mother's sake.

JIM. Did you hear what the Belgian child said about her mother?

ALAN. (*Taken aback*) Yes,—of course,—but—

JIM. What makes you think that our mother is any safer?

ALAN. Mother—nothing could harm her—she's at home—

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JIM. The same terror is hovering over her.

ALAN. (*Horried*) You say that!—

JIM. This isn't an epoch of latch-keys.

ALAN. But what can one do?

JIM. (*Looking him straight in the eyes*) Alan! You make this key safe, and you can have it back.

ALAN. (*Slowly*) Is that necessary?

JIM. Yes.

ALAN. I haven't wanted to do anything.

JIM. Why?

ALAN. You.

JIM. Were you ashamed of me?

ALAN. Oh, you know how *proud*—!

JIM. Were you afraid to follow me?

ALAN. It honestly wasn't that.—

JIM. Then I don't understand.

ALAN. Why, the principle of the thing.—

JIM. Do you know the principle of the thing?

ALAN. (*In his queer tone*) Do you?

JIM. Why shouldn't I?

ALAN. Oh, I'm all mixed up, Jim Braith. Everything I ever believed in has been disproved to-night before my very eyes. Just before I came to the Land Where Lost Things Go, I was quarreling with Bob and my crowd—about the war—you see? And they set you up to me for an example, and I—(*He gets up, walks away, and then returns to JIM*) Do you mind if I tell you what I said?

JIM. About me?

ALAN. Yes. It wasn't very decent, but it was true enough—then. Wasn't it, Jim,—you went to war for the lark of it? Did you know what a principle was?

JIM. I hadn't the faintest idea.

ALAN. Ah! And then I told 'em you'd consider ending up a hero the biggest joke of the lot—if you knew about it. And you do know about it. But you're not the same Jim.

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JIM. Shall I tell you at last what changed me?

ALAN. What?

JIM. The principle of the thing.

ALAN. Oh!—You found it back there.

JIM. Now you see. So many people taking my big lark seriously. First I laughed at them, and then I wondered why they did it. And I asked them, and they said, "We're too busy to talk." And so I had to think.

ALAN. For yourself.

JIM. While I was thinking, I got to where things happened. When I saw ruin, I said, "I've come to avenge this, because that is now the best game on earth, but the ruin means nothing to me." And little by little the ruin meant that there must be none like it at home, for if there were, it would kill me.

ALAN. But there won't be!

JIM. When I saw death, I thought of myself as something higher than a player in a game. It puffed me all up, to think how noble I was to risk that, for saving the ruins of other people. And then I bragged of it, this is how they answered me. "The same blight threatens to fall on us all," they said, "And it is our poor black ruins that have stood between it and you, and kept it from your door. We have given our soil for you, and you grudge us the youth and strength and willingness that make a fair return." And I was ashamed.

ALAN. Jim, is it that?

JIM. The principle.

ALAN. You mean it isn't just helping other people and getting no regard.—

JIM. But rewarding people who have helped us!

ALAN. Oh, I see.—I see.—

JIM. I paid for my share the best I knew how.

ALAN. And now it's my turn!

JIM. At the end, there is peace.—

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ALAN. My turn. My debt.

JIM. And still so much to do.

ALAN. Jim!

JIM. What is it, kid?

ALAN. When I get home, I'll do what I can!

JIM. I know you will!

ALAN. And I'll make ready for more in the years to come.—

JIM. When you are older.

ALAN. Yes. Till soon I can make it up to my own country for doubting the finest stand it ever took, and to the other nations for holding back what little I could do. (*He smiles up into his brother's eyes*) And you'll be proud of me yet,—please God.

(*The chimes of the lost cathedrals ring out again, pealing more triumphant than before.*)

JIM. (*Holding out his hand, and speaking through the bells*) Go home, then; and good luck!

ALAN. (*Gripping his hand*) You needn't think I'll forget.—

JIM. You won't be able to. Not till you come here again, and tell me what you've done!

(*Now there has begun to mingle with the chimes the sound of a smaller, thinner, and more persistent bell. And gradually, as the two brothers stand together, the chimes fade into the air, while the little new bell rings clearer—clearer—Blackness swallows up everything but the sound of it. [Now there should be almost no wait, with the house kept dark, and the intermittent ringing of the small bell continued. If the walls of the room are left standing behind the curtains, it should be a simple matter to take down these curtains, remove the tree-trunk, and bring on the chairs and table.]*)

EPILOGUE

SCENE: *It begins where the prologue left off. Only, now, the telephone on the table beside ALAN is ringing and ringing. At last he lifts his head from his arms, and looks about, bewildered. Then he gets up, goes to the back of the table, and takes the instrument.*

ALAN. (*In a dazed voice*) Hello.—Yes, this is Alan.—Oh, Bob!—(*His voice clears a little, as the familiar name brings back reality. He smiles, as he says:*) No, I hadn't gone to bed.—You want to what?—Oh, no, no, please don't apologize! Please!—Yes, of course, I was your guest, and your mother thinks you were horrid. They always do.—But you fellows were right!—Yes, I said it. Dead right, Bob. (*He is very earnest, almost reverent*) Oh, I know a thing or two—now.—(*Then a half-mischievous smile*) Thank you for it? Don't be too sure—

(*The curtain falls on him talking.*)

